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ABSTRACT

The paper provides information about a survey designed to ascertain which states require a state studies course and the evaluation of these courses. Forty-three of 46 states affiliated with the Council of State Social Studies Specialists responded to questions asking: (1) if their state required state studies in its school curriculum; (2) if there was a state-wide assessment for this program; and (3) if there were any related or future projects for assessment in their state studies program. Data indicated that although the majority of states did require a state study course as part of their educational system, New Hampshire was the only state to indicate the use of a state-wide assessment of its state studies course. This testing was mandated and funded by the state legislature. Further, while Indiana does not provide for state-wide assessment, one school district in that state has developed an item pool for the Indiana history course. (TRS)

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A SURVEY OF REQUIRED STATE STUDIES COURSES AND THEIR EVALUATION

BY

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INTRODUCTION

In 1977 the National Council for the Social Studies formed the Committee on Testing (COT). As part of the committee's examination of the use of competency testing in the social studies specific information regarding state studies courses was provided (Moore, 1980). This information is especially interesting in light of so many vocal supporters and opponents of state studies (Blaga & Nielson, 1983; Cordier, 1969; Cousins, 1967; Dabbert, 1966; Duplaisir & Kraus, 1981; Fink, 1969; Fuller et al., 1982; Massialas & Cox, 1974; Moore, 1966; Smith, 1972; Spangler, 1966; Van Leuvan, 1971).

The Committee on Testing surveyed the forty-eight states that held membership in the Council of State Social Studies Specialists (CS4). The survey reported twenty-eight states requiring a state studies course in their social studies curriculum. The survey also showed one state providing state-wide testing for this program. Since this study was dated by some four to five years, another survey was conducted.

PROCEDURES

In 1983, using procedures similar to those used by the COT, data was collected regarding state studies courses and related assessment. At the time of this survey there were forty-six states affiliated with the CS4. The person belonging to CS4 in these states was contacted by way

of a letter which asked: (1) If their state required state studies in its school curriculum, (2) If there was a state-wide assessment for this program, and (3) If there were any related or future projects toward assessment in their state studies program.

FINDINGS

The following table shows the results of the survey:

STATES CONTACTED	STATES NOT RESPONDING	STATE STUDIES REQUIRED	STATE-WIDE TESTING PROVIDED
Alabama		X	
Alaska			
Arizona			
Arkansas			
California		X	
Connecticut			
Delaware			
Florida		X	
Georgia		X	
Hawaii		X	
Illinois			
Indiana		X	X**
Iowa		X	
Kansas		X	
Kentucky		X	
Louisiana		X	
Maine		X	
Massachusetts			
Michigan		X	
Minnisota			
Mississippi		X	
Missouri			
Montana	X		
Nebraska		X	
Nevada	X		
New Hampshire		X	X
New Jersey			
New Mexico			
New York		X	
North Carolina		X	
North Dakota			
Ohio		X	
Oklahoma *		X	
Oregon			
Pennsylvania		X	
Rhode Island		X	
South Carolina		X	
Tennessee			
Texas			
Utah			
Vermont			
Virginia	X		
Washington			
West Virginia		X	
Wisconsin		X	
Wyoming		X	

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States that were not affiliated with the CS4 were Colorado, Idaho, Maryland and South Dakota. Of the forty-six members only three did not respond to the survey: Montana, Nevada and Virginia. Twenty-five responses indicated that a state studies course was a required part of their school curriculum.

New Hampshire was the only state which indicated the use of a state-wide assessment of its state studies course. Through further investigation it was found that this testing was mandated and funded by the state legislature. It was also discovered that even though Indiana does not provide for state-wide assessment in this area one school district, Warrick County in conjunction with Indiana State University, developed an item pool for the required Indiana history course.

CONCLUSION

Since the majority of states do require a state studies course as part of their educational system it is interesting to find that only one state is interested in its systems' effectiveness in teaching that course. Whether or not one agrees with the inclusion of a state studies course in its school curriculum it seems only logical that, since it is a fact of life in so many states, citizens would be interested in the degree of teachers' effectiveness in teaching and students' achievement in learning that particular subject matter. This survey provides information as to what states require a state studies course and those states concerned enough to evaluate that course.

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